



H.Res. 865 – A resolution expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the March 2007 report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development makes an important contribution to the understanding of the high levels of crime and violence in the Caribbean, and that the United States should work with the current member states of Caribbean Community and the Dominican Republic to address crime and violence in the region

FLOOR SITUATION

H.Res. 865 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Yvette Clarke (D-NY) on December 11, 2007. The resolution was referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs where the Committee agreed to seek consideration under suspension of the rules.

H.Res. 865 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on April 1, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.Res. 865 resolves that the House of Representatives:

- Welcomes the recommendations contained in the March 2007 UNODC and World Bank report, "Crime, Violence, and Development: Trends, Costs, and Policy Options in the Caribbean";
- Urges the United States Government to consider fully and carefully the recommendations in the UNODC and World Bank Report and to take the recommendations into account when developing United States policy toward the region;
- Urges the governments of the United States and other drug-consuming countries to increase counter-narcotics assistance to the Caribbean region;
- Urges the United States Government to increase coordination on policy development and implementation with Caribbean governments to help combat crime and violence in the region;
- Urges the Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security to work with Caribbean governments to mitigate the negative effects of United States deportation policy;
- Urges governments of Caribbean countries to consider fully and carefully the recommendations in the UNODC and World Bank Report, and to take the recommendations into account, especially regarding improvements in their criminal justice systems; and
- Urges the United States Government to consider the impact on the current member states of Caribbean countries and the Dominican Republic of the proposed Merida Initiative to combat drugs, violence, and transnational crime in Mexico and Central America, especially whether a successful plan will drive narco-traffickers from Mexico and Central America to the current member states of Caribbean countries or the Dominican Republic.



LEGISLATIVE DIGEST

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BACKGROUND

Crime is a major issue in the Caribbean and surrounding areas. Due to its geographic location, islands in the Caribbean are used a stopover point for narcotics headed to the United States. The U.S. works with many nations in the Caribbean to combat drug-trafficking and violence.

The Bahamas, for example, participates as an active partner in "Operation Bahamas and Turks and Caicos" (OPBAT), which is a multi-agency international drug interdiction effort established in 1982. The aim of the program is to provide co-operation between the Caribbean and the U.S. to help stop the flow of drug traffic into the U.S.

The Drug Enforcement Unit (DEU) of the Royal Bahamas Police Force (RBPF) cooperates closely with the U.S. and foreign law enforcement agencies on drug investigations. It was able to arrest 1,399 persons on drug-related offenses and seized drug-related assets valued at nearly \$2.5 million in 2006, according to the State Department.

In the Dominican Republic, the FBI office presented a course on Basic Crime Scene Investigation in March 2006. FBI instructors taught 30 National Police Officers and 10 prosecutors about the collection and preservation of crime scene evidence. The 30 police officers that graduated were presented with Crime Scene Kits for use in their investigations.

Despite these efforts, drug-trafficking and violence remains a challenge in the Caribbean. In March 2007, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank) issued a report entitled, "Crime, Violence, and Development: Trends, Costs, and Policy Options in the Caribbean." The report noted the following observations:

- The Caribbean region has the highest murder and assault rates in the world, with murder rates at 4 times the level of the United States;
- Crime cost the Jamaican economy \$12,400,000,000 in Jamaican dollars, 3.7 percent of its gross domestic product, in 2001;
- Youth violence is a particularly serious problem in the region, and youth homicide rates in several countries of the region are significantly above the world average.

STAFF CONTACT

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